

mentalists and Board members. The information I acquired justified my belief that there is confusion on the essential points of the subject, and there is something wrong in the philosophy of the training of conductors. If this is true within the profession, a corresponding confusion among the public is not surprising.

Undoubtedly, one or another phase of this complex art may be readily understood. The reader may find ideas here which will seem to him to need little elaboration; but he will also find here what I am convinced is widely lacking, and that is, a fully worked out exposition of the total function and interrelation of the modern conductor, score, orchestra and audience.

My purpose is to present a comprehensive view of the conductor's role, and portray the entity called "conductor" in dimensions which will enable the reader to appreciate the importance of the "WHY" of his craft as well as the "HOW." Toward the realization of this end, I am privileged to be able to present the opinions of many distinguished, dedicated authorities who are vital participants in the contemporary musical world. The insights contained in their statements, so generously provided, will help to bring into sharp focus the entity "Behind the Baton."

C. B.

Behind the Baton

BEHIND THE BATON

Charles Blackman

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*Dedicated to my wife
with love and gratitude for her unending faith.*

My deepest appreciation and heartfelt thanks to all the people who have, by the statements they so generously contributed, immeasurably enhanced this book.

I also wish to acknowledge a debt of gratitude to my friends and colleagues who read the manuscript in various stages, criticized and encouraged me.

Charles Blackman

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Preface

This book arises out of two factors—a long, practical experience and intimate association with orchestras and conductors, as well as the conviction that there is a growing misconception of their relative functions and responsibilities.

It would seem, at first glance, that there need be no difficulty in grasping the role of the modern conductor. After all, he works in a blazing glow of publicity, and it appears to many that what he is doing on the podium is, or should be, fairly obvious. And there is no lack of texts on the “How to” of the conductor’s art in which his function is neatly prescribed in elaborate rule of procedure, guides to gesture, and so forth.

Yet the matter, on any kind of serious analysis, especially from "inside the profession" so to speak, turns out not to be that simple, and the further one delves into the subject the more does diversity of opinion and the widest variations of practice begin to appear.

The conductor as we know him today is, one must recognize, only a recent development in the history of music, and even within the past three or four generations there have been conspicuous differences in his procedures, in his relation to his players, and the way in which the musical public views his role.

From the days when the composer was his own conductor down to the day of the virtuoso conductor (or glamorized public idol), the changes have been notable indeed. With such changes, and with diverse methods of educating conductors and choosing them, many distortions and obscurities have developed. At the same time great conductors have made their appearance, men and musicians of a type not known or needed before.

In this metamorphosis, a certain air of mystery has arisen as to just how the creative musical and social function of the conductor (for he is a voice of the community whose music he helps to make) is carried out, or, how it can be warped or evaded even by men who are not obscure in the field.

My personal interest prompted me to make an extensive survey of opinions held by people involved with orchestral performance in various sections of the country. I spoke with conductors, music educators, instru-